



Talking about Your PTSD

STEP 1: PREPARATION

☐ **Do your homework**

Do some research and read about PTSD or talk with your trusted friends or doctor. You will feel more confident if you've done some preparation.

☐ **Understand what your child wants to know**

A child often needs answers to: "What is it? Will I get it? Will my parent get better?" Be hopeful yet honest with your child but avoid too much detail. Also be aware of how to talk at a level appropriate for your child.

☐ **Have appropriate expectations**

You need to acknowledge that you may not have all the answers about the issues.

☐ **Have another trusted adult involved if necessary**

You don't have to do this all alone. Think about if you'd like someone else involved in the discussion as well. It may be helpful to have another trusted adult, parent or friend help facilitate the conversation. Also, it might be helpful to get their feedback about what they notice in your children and how you're interacting with them. Try to be open to their feedback and realize it may be difficult to hear.

☐ **Pick a good time to talk**

Timing is everything!

- If your child is young, ensure that the child is not especially sleepy, physically sick, grumpy or having a bad day.
- If your child is a teenager, you may want to schedule the discussion in advance so your child can feel prepared.

STEP 2: STARTING THE CONVERSATION (Beginning)

- Start the conversation slowly and regularly solicit feedback or questions. Avoid sharing more than one or two ideas at a time. Remember, you'll likely talk about these issues many times!



WORKSHEET: Talk about Your PTSD

STEP 3: DURING THE CONVERSATION (Middle)

Things to say:

- Be honest, hopeful but avoid too much detail.
- Tell your child you are open to hearing how they see and experience you but realize that some of their feedback may be difficult to hear.
- Tell your child that they are not to blame – they didn't do anything wrong!
- Avoid putting your child in the “caregiver” role and giving them too much responsibility when they want to help manage your emotional issues. However, you can talk with your child about small things they can do to be helpful, for example:
 - Giving you a hug
 - Sending you a sweet text message/email
 - Avoiding surprising you by running up behind you

Things to do:

- If your child starts becoming tearful, quiet, or scared, pay attention! They are telling you something! This probably means what you're sharing is upsetting, and it's time to stop sharing information and check in with them about their feelings or thoughts.
- If you start becoming overwhelmed and experience very strong emotions, you may want to move toward ending the conversation. It will be important to let your child know later when you have re-grouped emotionally that you are OK. You could even tell them what you did to calm down (this can be a teachable moment!). Then, reassure your child that you will have the discussion again at a later time.

STEP 4: ENDING THE CONVERSATION (End)

- Show your appreciation to your child for their feedback.
- Remind your child of ask questions and share feelings as they arise.